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ABSTRACT

Reading and writing are interrelated. What has been read provides material for writing. This paper focuses on reading endeavors that provide subject matter for writing. The paper first recommends reading poetry to the class and states that the teacher should have ready for use an anthology of children's literature. Children can write poems for holidays and for other subjects, such as science, math, art, music, and physical education. The paper also recommends students becoming proficient in writing letters, both business and friendly letters. Writing play parts for dramatic endeavors can be challenging as well as interesting for students. Novels need to be on the reading level of students to be beneficial for comprehension purposes, and written work pertaining to the novel can help in organizing the contents since students can write about characterization, setting, plot, irony, and the theme. Expository reading might also provide students with a good opportunity to organize ideas for writing. Teachers need to add to the list of reading and writing experiences as the need and occasion arises. And quality sequence in learning must be emphasized so that each student might experience success in learning to perceive the reading/writing connections. Contains 9 references. (NKA)

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Reading and Writing Connections in the Language Arts.

by Marlow Ediger

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READING AND WRITING CONNECTIONS IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading and writing are interrelated. What has been read provides subject matter for writing. The subject matter needs to be clearly understood and meaningful. In addition to reading, there are a plethora of experiences which provide content for writing. These experiences may consist of every day life's activities, objects and models, the natural environment, times of joy as well as of sorrow, excitement, loneliness, feelings of tiredness, urban as well as of rural life, wild imaginations, among others. There is much to lean upon when thinking about background information for written work. This paper will focus upon reading endeavors to provide subject matter for writing.

Reading Poetry and the Writing Connection

The teacher should have on the desk top and ready for use an anthology of Children's Literature. This book should contain poetry of different topics to read to students. Thus there needs to be poems on holidays, the seasons, the social sciences, science, mathematics, art, music, and physical education. Poetry selected for reading to students emphasize definite goals for learners to achieve. Thus, students listen to and read poetry in order to write selected kinds of verse. If students are to write rhymed poetry, they need to see and hear models of what is being stressed as an objective such as in couplets, triplets, quatrains, and limericks.

If students are to write a tanka, they need to experience a variety of tankas which interest and engage the learner. After adequate background information has been obtained, students individually or collaboratively may experiment with words containing a five, seven, five, seven, seven, number of syllables consecutively per line in writing the tanka. Perhaps, prior to this in sequence, students had studied and written haiku poetry which has a five, seven, five number of syllables per line sequentially of verse. The tanka has two more lines, each containing seven and seven syllables per line.

The following is an example of a tanka entitled The Football Team:

Running hard throughout
On the gridiron each way
Never cease to care
Tackles and passes to win
A touchdown and more to come!

1

Students need to evaluate what makes for a tanka and how creativity may be stressed within the framework of a tanka (Ediger and Rao, 2000, Chapter Eight).

As an additional kind of verse, poetry with rhyme needs to be studied by students by looking at models, listening to rhymed verse, and reading poetry containing rhyme. The limerick is an interesting kind of poetry containing rhyme. The limerick, among other things, contains a couplet with two lines of ending words rhyming, as well as a triplet with three ending words rhyming. Thus, lines one, two, and five rhyme as well as lines three and four rhyming. Most limericks start with the words, "There once was ..." The following is an example entitled A Box:

There once was a large box
Which was used as a house by a fox
It was torn and worn
and looked very much forlorn
That ragged old box with no locks.

Preceding the written work on limericks in sequence, students may have studied, read, and wrote couplets, triplets, and quatrains. Quality sequence in learning is important for students when writing poetry with creativity being the major goal in teaching and learning situations. Students need to notice the reading/writing connections when poetry writing is being emphasized (Tiedt, 1983).

Practicality in Letter Writing

Students need to become proficient in the writing of letters. They are very commonly used as means of communication whether by snail mail, fax, or e- mail. Both business and friendly letters need to be emphasized in the reading/writing curriculum. Each needs to stress proper form in writing. Purpose in writing using recommended form needs to be stressed such as why the heading, greeting, inside address, body, closing, and signature are important. Clarity of ideas expressed must be in evidence in the body of the letter. In the business letter the reader needs to know what has been ordered in terms of merchandise wanted, whereas the informal message in the friendly letter needs to possess interesting and distinct ideas for the receiver. The other parts of the friendly/business letter are conventional and somewhat standardized. Friendly and business letters should emphasize utilitarian learnings in that the contents are actually sent to a receiver. Hopefully, an appropriate

response will be in the offing. Reading and writing connections need to be perceived in friendly and business letter writing (Ediger, 1997, Chapter Twelve).

Writing Play Parts for a Formal Dramatization

Writing play parts for dramatic endeavors can be challenging as well as interesting. When readiness is in evidence, a committee of students may use content from literature or from history in designing the different parts to be played by classmates. For example, if students are to write play parts for "The Age of Discovery," they may do research from a variety of sources, including internet and the World Wide Web, on Christopher Columbus and his crew on the Pinto, the Nina, and the Santa Maria. The problems and difficulties such securing money and ships for the long journey, crew members who could persevere over hardships, foods and food sources being taken on board ship, health and dietary problems, mutiny aboard ship along the way when sailing, as well as dealing with natives in the New World. Meaningful content needs to be possessed by each person on the committee. The committee, in return, needs to inform other classmates on the research results.

The play parts need to be accurate and carefully edited by the committee. Volunteers for each part in the dramatization should be willing to read aloud their individual roles fluently and with appropriate stress, pitch, and juncture. Props need to be minimal but emphasize those which enhance the presentation. The goals in the dramatic experience are

1. to read with comprehension those sources which assist students to understand the roles of individuals in the Age of Discovery.
2. to write quality play parts for individuals in the dramatization. The reading/writing connection is important.
3. to use effective oral communication to present the Age of Discovery to others (See Gerke, 1996).

Reading a Novel and Writing

Novels need to be on the reading level of students to be of benefit for comprehension purposes. Frustration sets in if the content is too difficult to read. The other extreme being if the content is too easy, boredom may become inherent in reading.

Written work pertaining to the novel read needs to include selected elements in order that proper organization of content is in evidence.

First, characterization needs to be developed thoroughly. Adequate description is necessary for the reader to understand the character or characters in the novel or story. The writer needs to write with clarity if the character changes in the novel or if sameness is there. The reader wants to know, directly or indirectly, if the character is well educated, skilled in a line of work, and or is stable/transient in a community. Adequate time and effort needs to be given in developing the character fully.

2. Second, characters live in a setting. Thus, the setting of the novel needs careful attention. In writing, the writer needs to assess and evaluate the setting in order to present the novel in its fullest dimensions. Where do the events in the novel take place? A rural area is much different as compared to an inner city environment. More different yet is the general suburban environment with its wealth, large homes, spacious yards, luxury cars, fancy yachts, somewhat extravagant life styes, and ego centered individuals. Characterization will be reflected within the setting of the novel. There are certain assumptions made about a character if he/she lives in a rural, urban, or suburban environment. In heavily populated urban areas, the tendency would be for the character being limited in income or even be unemployed. Poverty might be there or in evidence. A struggle for existence in securing the basic necessities in life might well be in the offing.

3. Third, plot tells what happened in the novel, involving the character(s), and the setting, among other items. The happenings from beginning to end follow in some kind of sequence with the end result being the plot. Many plots tend to be filled with suspense. An eagerness on the part of the reader is involved when desiring to know what truly did happen in the novel.

4. Fourth, irony is involved in the novel when a strange occurrence of events is in the offing. Thus, a person having grown up in a somewhat ideal family goes awry and follows a negative life style. The individual then does opposite of what was expected.

5. Fifth, a theme is presented by the writer in the novel. The theme is a persistent message or truth as perceived by the writer. The theme may be stressed in various ways throughout the written work (See Gunning, 2000).

By following the above model, students with teacher guidance may analyze a novel in terms of component parts, but remembering the totality of the written work being meaningful to the reader. The novel read needs to be on his/her reading level of

understanding. The reading/writing connection is important here.

Reading Subject Matter for Writing

Expository reading might well provide students with a good opportunity to organize ideas for writing. The written product may consist of an outline (See Anderson and Armbruster, 1984). Outlines can be interesting for learner development if the teacher is enthused about its writing. The teacher needs to show enthusiasm here by using voice inflection with appropriate stress, pitch, and juncture. Observing students carefully as the teaching and learning situation progresses assists students to feel that there is withitness by the teacher in helping learners stay on task. The teacher, too, needs to have excellent knowledge about outlining procedures and skill in implementing a well prepared lesson plan. All students need to listen carefully and participate fully in the discussion. Students, too, are involved in making any learning activity a success or failure. A quality model of an outline needs to be viewed by students and would look like the following:

I major division
  A. subdivision
    1. detail
    2. detail
  B. subdivision
    1. detail
    2. detail
II major division
  A. subdivision
    1. detail
    2. detail
  B. subdivision

Students need to perceive why there are major divisions (counting Roman numerals), two or more subdivisions (containing upper case sequential letters) under each major division, as well as at least two details under each subdivision (listed sequentially in traditional numerals). Thus, purpose is involved for attaching meaning to each part of the outline. The teacher, however, needs to notice where each student is presently in achievement and then provide for students individually to progress continuously. Younger children will not be able to achieve at a level in writing which older students can attain, unless the former has more ability. Each ability and age level needs to be respected and accepted. All students need to

be taught in a manner whereby success and optimal achievement are in evidence. Possessing the background information and being ready for new, challenging learnings are musts in the writing curriculum.

In outlines, students learn about major and supporting ideas, discussed by the author, of what has been read. When students discuss trivia, they have not learned how to separate the important from the much lesser important ideas. When students do not present evidence to support the major ideas, they have not learned to put the subordinate ideas in proper place. Also, details need to support the subordinate ideas. Outlining then emphasizes a thinking process, not rote learning nor memorization. Outlining, too, stresses the importance of weighing subject matter in terms of major ideas being supported by subordinate content, as well as subordinate ideas being supported by details. Not all ideas read, of course, have the same position in a hierarchy (Ediger and Rao, 2001,115-116).

When reading a selection on the Middle East region of the world, the student may have read ideas such as the following, among others:

1. The West Bank of the Jordan River contains many holy sites to Muslims, Christians, and Jews.
2. The walled city of Jerusalem is located on the West Bank.
3. The Dome of the Rock, a Muslim Mosque built in 691 AD, is the third holiest site to devout Muslims and is located inside the walled city.
4. The Western Wall of the ancient Jewish Temple is located next to the Dome of the Rock.
5. The city of Bethlehem, birth place of Christ and the Christian religion, is located on the West Bank.
6. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem contains the Grotto area which marks the birth place with a fourteen point star.
7. Nablus, ancient Samara, has a colony of 400 Samaritans which have not intermarried with other cultures since they were captured by the Assyrians in 732 BC (See Ediger, 1998, 53-59).

When viewing the above named seven statements, item one would be a major idea and would have a Roman numeral one in front of it. Statements two, three, four, five, and seven are supporting ideas in that they tell about the West Bank of the Jordan. Supporting ideas would have sequential letters of the alphabet in capital letters. Statement number six is the only detail listed and tells/elaborates about number five. Each detail then has a numeral in its introduction.

Closing

There are a plethora of writing experiences which assist students to understand the reading/writing connections. The author has discussed poetry, letter writing, dramatizations, novels, and subject matter experiences for learners to perceive the relationships between reading and writing. Teachers need to add to the list, as the need and occasion arises. Purpose or reasons should be inherent for each learning opportunity. The interests of students need to be cultivated so that active engagement in learning is in evidence. Individual differences need careful consideration so that optimal achievement for each student is possible. Quality sequence in learning must be emphasized so that each student might experience success in learning to perceive the reading/writing connections (See Murray, 1989).

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